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## Clean the Bay, it's Best for Everyone

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By **BRENT M. HADDAD AND  
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Guest Commentary

Monterey officials protested recently that cleaning up contaminated urban runoff, California's top source of water pollution, is just too expensive.

In his April 10 Guest Commentary, Monterey Mayor Dan Albert said that urban runoff protection would cost "untold billions." In fact, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the average cost of effective municipal storm water cleanup is \$8.93 per household per year -- about the cost of a movie ticket. The issue is not cost.

A toxic brew flows through our storm drains, containing everything from automotive fluids to animal remains, and on into coastal waters. It steadily erodes the value of our biggest economic resource -- a clean, healthy bay. We need to stop contaminated runoff before it further damages Monterey Bay and poisons the

county's \$1.8 billion tourism economy.

An unhappy reaction from scientists, community groups and conservation organizations to a weak proposal for stemming polluted runoff should come as no surprise. The plan, to be considered by the Regional Water Board on Thursday, fails to protect the sensitive marine ecosystems along the Monterey Peninsula, where rich kelp forests and ocean canyons teem with corals, sea otters, seals, dolphins, yellowfin tuna, rockfish and numerous species of whales and sharks. It also fails to protect tens of thousands of residents and tourists who use the bay for recreation and to earn a living.

The civic challenge is real, but hardly overwhelming. Local municipalities need to design an effective, multi-year plan to clean up urban runoff. Effective plans stop pollution at the source, reduce polluted discharge into coastal waters and educate the public. After all, the magnificent resources of Monterey Bay and Big Sur are

at stake. Giving credit where credit is due, the cities have included some positive initiatives in the proposed plan, but more can be done to effectively protect our waters. It's in all of our best interests.

California cities from Alameda to Compton have been required for years to control polluted urban runoff with methods such as catch-basin filters, regular storm-drain cleaning and inspections of industrial and construction sites. These cities designed plans that are cost-effective and that solve region-specific problems. The Monterey Peninsula cities and Monterey County can do the same.

It's time for our officials to stop protesting the cost and seek the available solutions. Let's get to work protecting our treasured natural resources.

*Brent M. Haddad is associate professor of environmental studies at UC-Santa Cruz, and Jane De Lay is executive director of Save Our Shores.*